



THE NAVAL AID BILL

SPEECH DELIVERED BY

Rt. HON. R. L. BORDEN

5th DECEMBER, 1912

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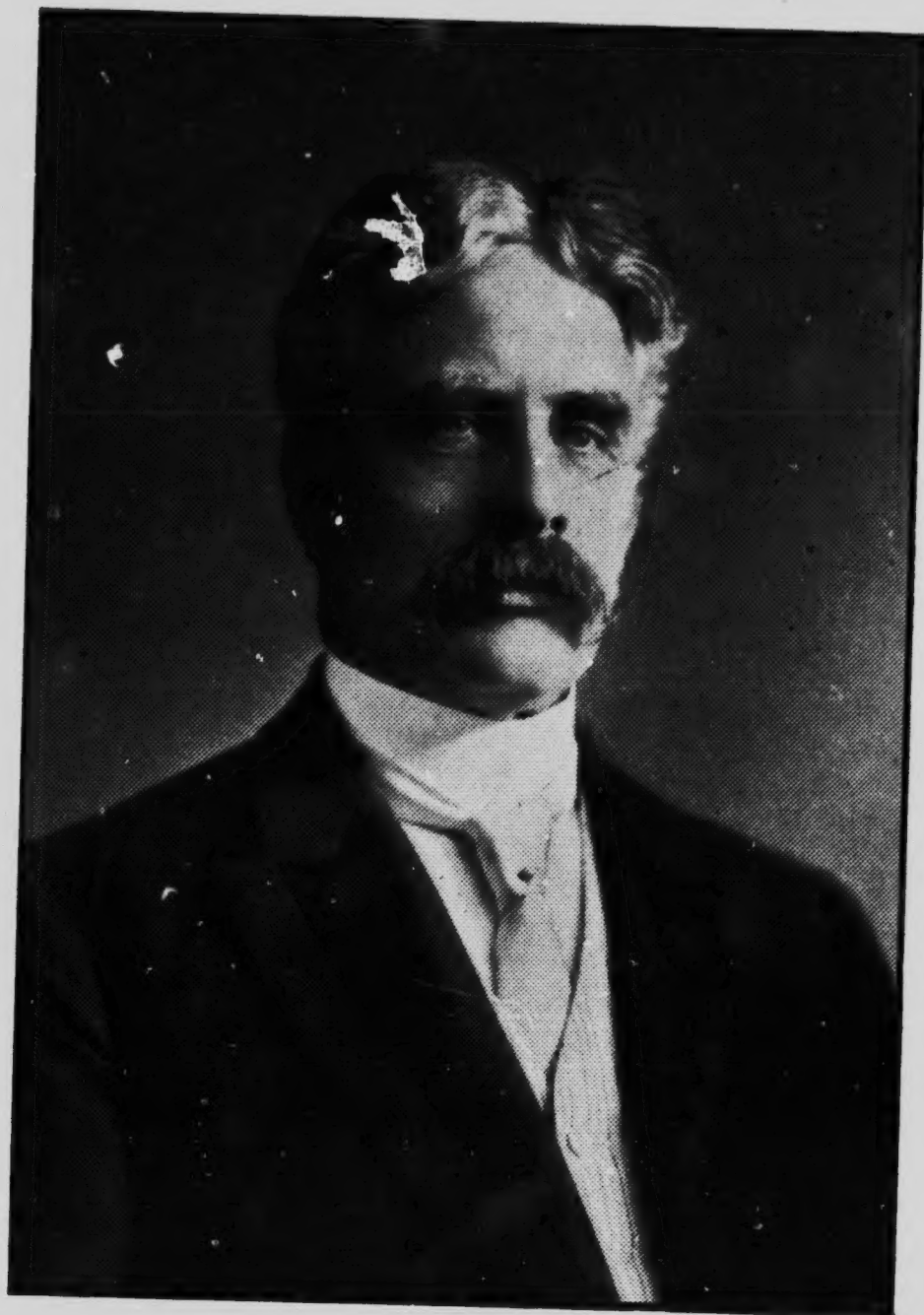
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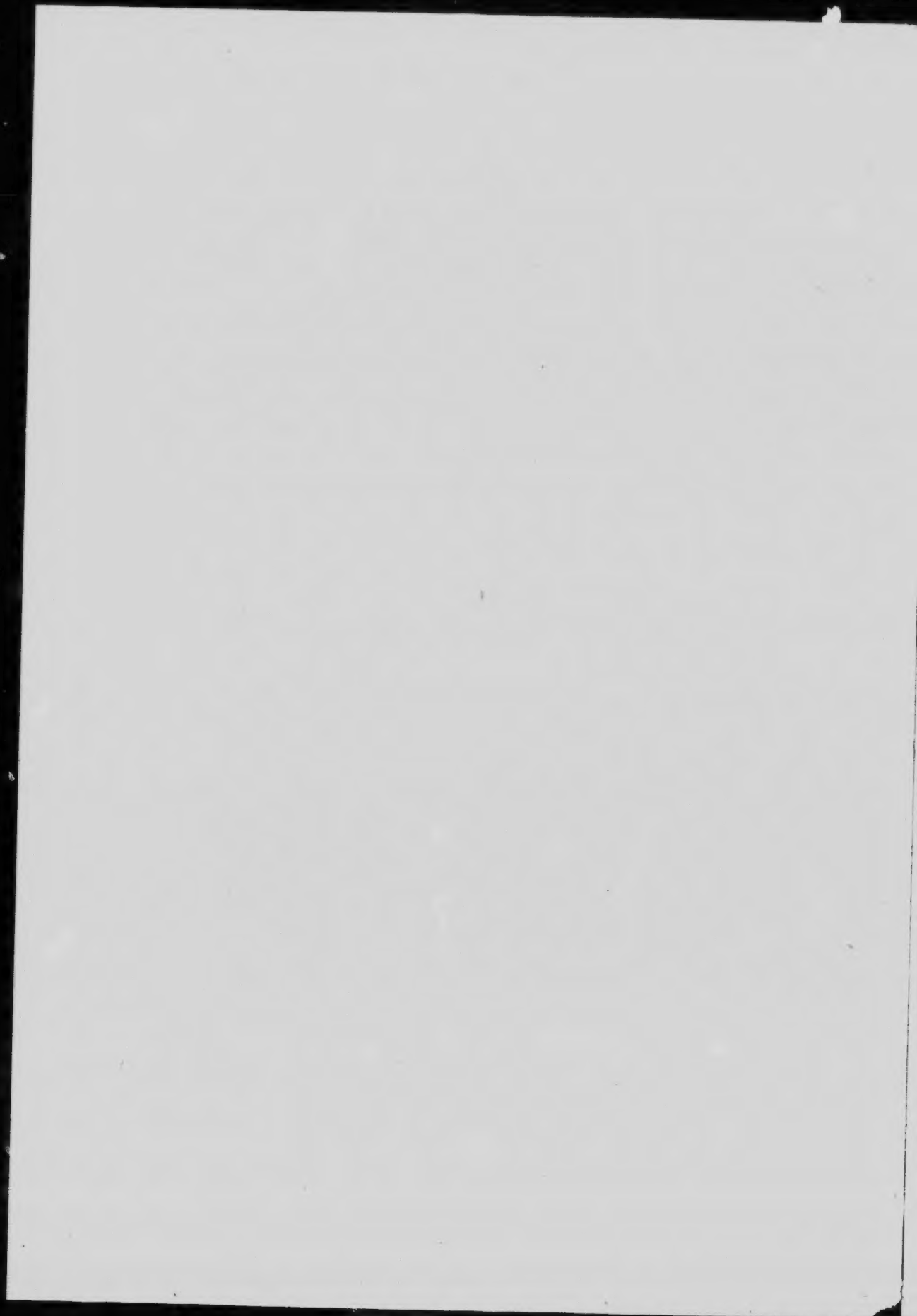
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R. L. Barden.



The Naval Forces of the Empire.

On the 5th of December, 1912, the Rt. Honourable R. L. Borden introduced in the Canadian House of Commons the Naval Aid Act. The object of this bill is to increase immediately the effective naval forces of the Empire. It provides for an expenditure of \$35,000,000 for the construction and equipment of battleships or armoured cruisers of the most modern and powerful type. When the ships are constructed they will be placed at the disposal of His Majesty for the common defence of the Empire.

Right Hon. R. L. BORDEN (Prime Minister) moved for leave to introduce Bill (No. 21) to authorize measures for increasing the effective naval forces of the Empire. He said: Mr. Speaker, in addressing the House upon so important a subject as that which I propose to discuss, I shall speak in no controversial spirit. If a portion of my remarks may necessarily controvert opinions which have been expressed by hon. gentlemen on either side of the House, let it be understood that I do so, not by way of criticism, but purely for the purpose of giving frankly to the House the reasons which have led the Government to adopt the course which I shall now outline.

It is not necessary to dwell upon the increasing power and influence of Canada within the Empire, due to its remarkable growth and expansion, and to the wonderful and rapid development of its resources during the past quarter of a century. With this increasing power and influence there has necessarily come by sure and gradual steps a certain development in our relations with the United Kingdom and the other dominions. The evolution of the constitutional relations within the Empire during the past half century has not been less marked than its material progress. In this

constitutional development, we are necessarily confronted with the problem of combining co-operation with autonomy. It seems most essential that there should be such co-operation in defence and in trade as will give to the whole Empire an effective organization in these matters of vital concern. (Cheers.) On the other hand, each dominion must preserve in all important respects the autonomous government which it now possesses. Responsibility for the Empire's defence upon the high seas, in which is to be found the only effective guarantee of its existence, and which has hitherto been assumed by the United Kingdom, has necessarily carried with it responsibility for and control of foreign policy. With the enormous increase of naval power which has been undertaken by all great nations in recent years, this tremendous responsibility has cast an almost impossible burden upon the British Islands, which for nearly a thousand years have exercised so profound an influence upon the world's history. That burden is so great that the day has come when either the existence of this Empire will be imperilled or the young and mighty dominions must join with the mother land to make secure the common safety and the common heritage of all. (Cheers.) When Great Britain no longer assumes sole responsibility for defence upon the high seas, she can no longer undertake to assume sole responsibility for and sole control of foreign policy which is closely, vitally, and constantly associated with that defence in which the dominions participate. It has been declared in the past, and even during recent years, that responsibility for foreign policy could not be shared by Great Britain with the dominions. In my humble opinion, adherence to such a position could have but one and that a most disastrous result. During my recent visit to the British Islands, I ventured on many public occasions to propound the principle that the great dominions, sharing in the defence of the Empire upon the high seas, must necessarily be entitled to share also in the responsibility for and in the control of foreign policy. No declaration that I made was greeted more heartily and enthusiastically than this. It is satisfactory to know that to-day not only His Majesty's ministers, but also the leaders of the opposite political party

in Great Britain have explicitly accepted this principle and have affirmed their conviction that the means by which it can be constitutionally accomplished must be sought, discovered and utilized without delay. (Applause.)

Before proceeding to declare and explain the proposals of the Government, I desire to call attention to certain remarks which I addressed to this House just two years ago in replying to inquiries as to the course we would pursue after attaining power. These remarks were as follows :

“ It may be fairly asked what we would do if we were in power to-day with regard to a great question of this kind. It seems to me that our plain course and duty would be this. The Government of this country are able to ascertain and to know, if they take the proper action for that purpose, whether the conditions which face the Empire at this time in respect of naval defence are grave. If we were in power we would endeavour to find that out, to get a plain, unvarnished answer to that question, and if the answer to that question, based upon the assurance of the Government of the mother country and the report of the naval experts of the Admiralty were such—and I think it would be such—as to demand instant and effective action by this country, then I would appeal to Parliament for immediate and effective aid, and if Parliament did not give immediate and effective aid I would appeal from Parliament to the people of the country. (Cheers.)

“ Then, Sir, as to the permanent policy, I think the people have a right to be consulted. I do not know whether I have made my position clear, but I have done so according to my humble capacity. I think the question of Canada's co-operation upon a permanent basis in Imperial defence involves very large and wide considerations. If Canada and the other dominions of the Empire are to take their part as nations of this Empire in the defence of the Empire as a whole, shall it be that we, contributing to that defence of the whole Empire, shall have absolutely, as citizens of this country, no voice whatever in the councils of the Empire. I

do not think that such would be a tolerable condition. I do not believe the people of Canada would for one moment submit to such a condition. Shall members of this House, representative men, representing 221 constituencies of this country from the Atlantic to the Pacific, shall no one of them have the same voice with regard to those vast Imperial issues that the humblest taxpayer in the British Isles has at this moment? (Hear, hear.) It does not seem to me that such a condition would make for the integrity of the Empire, for the closer co-operation of the Empire. Regard must be had to these far reaching considerations, a permanent policy would have to be worked out, and when that permanent policy has been worked out and explained to the people of Canada, to every citizen in this country (applause), then it would be the duty of any government to go to the people of Canada to receive their mandate and accept and act upon their approval or disapproval of that policy."

The present government assumed office on the 10th of October, 1911, and met Parliament on the 17th day of November following. It is hardly necessary to point out that there was no opportunity until after the close of the session to visit Great Britain or to consult the Admiralty in any effective way. Shortly after the session closed, I went to England accompanied by some of my colleagues, and for several weeks we had the opportunity from time to time of conferring with the British Government and of consulting with the technical and expert advisers of the Admiralty respecting the whole question of naval defence, and especially the conditions which confront the Empire at present and in the early future. I desire to express my warm appreciation of the manner in which we were received by His Majesty's Government, who took us most fully into their confidence on the great questions of foreign policy and of defence, and who accorded to us all relevant information at their disposal. A portion of this necessarily is of a very confidential character which cannot be made public; but an important part will be communicated to the House in a document which I shall lay on the table this afternoon.

In considering the power of the British Empire to maintain that predominance upon the sea which is essential to its safety and to its very existence, it is clear that reference to the other naval forces of the world cannot be excluded. Such references and comparisons are frequently made by all the great powers, and they do not imply anything unfriendly in intention or in spirit to other nations. (Hear, hear.) Indeed, a most distinct reference to the naval power of Great Britain has been set forth in the preamble to the naval law of one great empire which in recent years has sprung to the front with amazing rapidity in the development of its naval forces.

I now proceed to submit to the House the information which we have received from His Majesty's Government. It is in the form of a memorandum, as follows :—

From the Secretary of State for the Colonies to His Royal Highness the Governor General.

Downing Street, 25th October, 1912.

Sir,—1. I have the honour to transmit to Your Royal Highness the accompanying copy of a memorandum relating to the requirements of the naval defence of the Empire.

2. This document has been prepared by the Admiralty on the instructions of His Majesty's Government in compliance with the request of Mr. Borden with a view to presentation to the Dominion Parliament if, and when, the Dominion ministers deem it necessary.

I have, &c.,

L. HARCOURT.

MEMORANDUM.

Prepared by the Board of Admiralty on the General Naval Situation and communicated to the Government of Canada by His Majesty's Government.

1. The Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada has invited His Majesty's Government through the Board of Admiralty to prepare a statement of the present and immediately prospective requirements of the naval defence of the Empire for presentation to the Canadian Parliament if the Dominion Cabinet deem it necessary.

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty are prepared to comply and to supplement, in a form which can be made public, the confidential communications and conversations which have passed between the Admiralty and ministers of the Dominion Parliament during the recent visit to the United Kingdom.

The Admiralty set the greatest store by the important material, and still more important moral, assistance which it is within the power of Canada to give to maintaining British naval supremacy on the high seas, but they think it necessary to disclaim any intention however indirect, of putting pressure upon Canadian public opinion, or of seeking to influence the Dominion Parliament in a decision which clearly belongs solely to Canada. (Applause.)

The Admiralty therefore confine themselves in this statement exclusively to facts, and it is for the Dominion Government and Parliament to draw their own conclusions therefrom.

2. The power of the British Empire to maintain the superiority on the sea, which is essential to its security, must obviously be measured from time to time by reference

to the other naval forces of the world, and such a comparison does not imply anything unfriendly in intention or in spirit to any other power or group of powers. From this point of view the development of the German fleet during the last fifteen years is the most striking feature of the naval situation to-day. That development has been authorized by five successive legislative enactments, viz., the Fleet Laws of 1898, 1900, 1906, 1908, and 1912. These laws cover the period up to 1920.

Whereas, in 1898, the German fleet consisted of :—

- 9 battleships (excluding coast defence vessels),
- 3 large cruisers,
- 28 small cruisers,
- 113 torpedo boats, and
- 25,000 men,

maintained at an annual cost of 6,000,000*l.*, the full fleet of 1920 will consist of :—

- 41 battleships,
- 20 large cruisers,
- 40 small cruisers,
- 144 torpedo boats,
- 72 submarines, and
- 101,500 men,

estimated to be maintained at an annual cost of 23,000,000*l.* These figures, however, give no real idea of the advance, for the size and cost of ships has risen continually during the period, and, apart from increasing their total numbers, Germany has systematically replaced old and small ships, which counted as units in her earlier fleet, by the most powerful and costly modern vessels. Neither does the money provided by the estimates for the completed law represent the increase in cost properly attributable to the German navy, for many charges borne on British naval funds are otherwise defrayed in Germany; and the German navy comprises such a large proportion of new ships that the cost of maintenance and repair is considerably less than in navies which have been longer established.

3. The naval expansion of Germany has not been provoked by British naval increases. The German Government have repeatedly declared that their naval policy has not been influenced by British action, and the following figures speak for themselves :—

In 1905 Great Britain was building 4 capital ships, and Germany 2.

In 1906 Great Britain reduced to 3 capital ships, and Germany increased to 3.

In 1907 Great Britain built 3 capital ships, and Germany built 3.

In 1908 Great Britain further reduced to 2 capital ships, and Germany further increased to 4.

It was not until the efforts of Great Britain to procure the abatement or retardation of naval rivalry had failed for 3 successive years that the Admiralty were forced in 1909, upon a general review of the naval situation, to ask Parliament to take exceptional measures to secure against all possible hazards the safety of the Empire. In that year, 8 capital ships were laid down in Great Britain, and 2 others were provided by the Commonwealth of Australia and the Dominion of New Zealand respectively (Applause)—a total of 10.

4. In the spring of the present year the fifth German navy law was assented to by the Reichstag. The main feature of that law is not the increase in the new construction of capital ships, though that is important, but rather the increase in the striking force of ships of all classes which will be immediately available at all seasons of the year.

A third squadron of 8 battleships will be created and maintained in full commission as part of the active battle fleet. Whereas, according to the unamended law, the active battle fleet consisted of 17 battleships, 4 battle or large armoured cruisers, and 12 small cruisers, it will in the near future consist of 25 battleships, 8 battle or large armoured cruisers, and 18 small cruisers; and whereas at present, owing

to the system of recruitment which prevails in Germany, the German fleet is less fully mobile during the winter than during the summer months, it will, through the operation of this law, not only be increased in strength, but rendered much more readily available. Ninety-nine torpedo boat destroyers, instead of 66, will be maintained in full commission out of a total of 144; 72 new submarines will be built within the currency of the new law, and of these it is apparently proposed to maintain 54 with full permanent crews. Taking a general view, the effect of the law will be that nearly four-fifths of the entire German navy will be maintained in full permanent commission; that is to say, instantly and constantly ready for war.

So great a change and development in the German fleet involves, of course, important additions to their personnel. In 1898, the officers and men of the German navy amounted to 25,000. To-day that figure has reached 66,000. The new law adds 15,000 officers and men, and makes a total in 1920 of 101,500.

The new construction under the law prescribes the building of 3 additional battleships—1 to be begun next year, 1 in 1916—and 2 small cruisers, of which the date has not yet been fixed. The date of the third battleship has not been fixed. It has been presumed to be later than the six years which are in view. The cost of these increases in men and in material during the next six years is estimated at 10,500,000/ spread over that period above the previous estimates.

The facts set forth above were laid before the House of Commons on the 22nd July, 1912, by the First Lord of the Admiralty.

5. The effect of the new German navy law is to produce a remarkable expansion of strength and readiness. The number of battleships and large armoured cruisers which will be kept constantly ready and in full commission will be raised by the law from 21, the present figure, to 33—an addition of 12, or an increase of about 57 per cent.

The new fleet will, in the beginning, include about 20 battleships and large cruisers of the older type, but gradually as new vessels are built the fighting power of the fleet will rise until in the end it will consist completely of modern vessels.

The complete organization of the German fleet, as described by the latest law, will be 5 battle squadrons and a fleet flagship, comprising 41 battleships in all, each attended by a battle or armoured cruiser squadron, complete with small cruisers and auxiliaries of all kinds and accompanied by numerous flotillas of destroyers and submarines.

This full development will only be realized step by step; but already in 1914 2 squadrons will, according to Admiralty information, be entirely composed of what are called dreadnoughts, and the third will be made up of good ships like the 'Deutschlands' and the 'Braunschweigs,' together with 5 dreadnought battle cruisers.

This great fleet is not dispersed all over the world for duties of commerce protection or in discharge of Colonial responsibilities; nor are its composition and character adapted to those purposes. It is concentrated and kept concentrated in close proximity to the German and British coasts.

Attention must be drawn to the explicit declaration of the tactical objects for which the German fleet exists, as set forth in the preamble to the naval law of 1900 as follows :—

"In order to protect German trade and commerce under existing conditions, only one thing will suffice, namely, Germany must possess a battle fleet of such strength that even for the most powerful naval adversary a war would involve such risks as to make that power's own supremacy doubtful. For this purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval power, for, as a rule, a great naval power will not be in a position to concentrate all its forces against us."

6. It is now necessary to look forward to the situation in 1915.

IN HOME WATERS.

In the Spring of the year 1915:

Great Britain will have 25 dreadnought battleships and 2 'Lord Nelsons.'

Germany will have 17 dreadnought battleships.

Great Britain will have 6 battle cruisers.

Germany will have 6 battle cruisers.

These margins in new ships are sober and moderate. They do not err on the side of excess. The reason they suffice for the present is that Great Britain possesses a good superiority in battleships, and especially armoured cruisers, of the pre-dreadnought era.

The reserve of strength will steadily diminish every year, actually, because the ships of which it is composed grow old, and relatively, because the new ships are more powerful. It will diminish more rapidly if new construction in Germany is increased or accelerated. As this process continues, greater exertions will be required by the British Empire.

MEDITERRANEAN STATION.

Four battle cruisers and four armoured cruisers will be required to support British interests in the Mediterranean during the years 1913 and 1914. During those years the navies of Austria and Italy will gradually increase in strength, until in 1915 they will each possess a formidable fleet of 4 and 6 dreadnought battleships respectively, together with strong battleships of the pre-dreadnought types and other units, such as cruisers, torpedo-craft, etc. It is evident, therefore, that in the year 1915 our squadron of 4 battle cruisers and 4 armoured cruisers will not suffice to fulfil our requirements, and its whole composition must be re-considered.

OVERSEAS.

It has been necessary within the past decade to concentrate the fleet mainly in home waters.

In 1902 there were 160 British vessels on the overseas stations against 76 to-day.

7. Naval supremacy is of two kinds: general and local. General naval supremacy consists in the power to defeat in battle and drive from the seas the strongest hostile navy or combination of hostile navies wherever they may be found. Local superiority consists in the power to send in good time to, or maintain permanently in some distant theatre forces adequate to defeat the enemy or hold him in check until the main decision has been obtained in the decisive theatre. It is the general naval supremacy of Great Britain which is the primary safeguard of the security and interests of the great dominions of the Crown, and which for all these years has been the deterrent upon any possible designs prejudicial to or inconsiderate of their policy and safety. (Applause.)

The rapid expansion of Canadian sea-borne trade, and the immense value of Canadian cargoes always afloat in British and Canadian bottoms, here require consideration. On the basis of the figures supplied by the Board of Trade to the Imperial Conference of 1911, the annual value of the overseas trade of the Dominion of Canada in 1909-10 was not less than £72,000,000, and the tonnage of Canadian vessels was 718,000 tons, and these proportions have already increased and are still increasing. For the whole of this trade wherever it may be about the distant waters of the world, as well as for the maintenance of her communications, both with Europe and Asia, Canada is dependent, and has always depended upon the Imperial navy, without corresponding contribution or cost.

Further, at the present time and in the immediate future Great Britain still has the power, by making special arrange-

ments and mobilizing a portion of the reserves, to send, without courting disaster at home, an effective fleet of battleships and cruisers to unite with the Royal Australian navy and the British squadrons in China and the Pacific for the defence of British Columbia, Australia and New Zealand. (Applause.) And these communities are also protected and their interests safeguarded by the power and authority of Great Britain so long as her naval strength is unbroken. (Hear, hear.)

8. This power, both specific and general, will be diminished with the growth not only of the German navy, but by the simultaneous building by many powers of great modern ships of war.

Whereas, in the present year, Great Britain possesses 18 battleships and battle-cruisers of the dreadnought class against 19 of that class possessed by the other powers of Europe, and will possess in 1913, 24 to 21, the figure in 1914 will be 31 to 33, and in the year 1915, 35 to 51.

The existence of a number of navies all comprising ships of high quality must be considered in so far as it affects the possibilities of adverse combinations being suddenly formed. Larger margins of superiority at home would, among other things, restore a greater freedom to the movements of the British squadrons in every sea, and directly promote the security of the Dominions.

Anything which increases our margin in the newest ships diminishes the strain and augments our security and our chances of being left unmolested. (Applause.)

9. Whatever may be the decision of Canada at the present juncture, Great Britain will not in any circumstances fail in her duty to the Overseas Dominions of the Crown. (Cheers and loud applause, some Liberals joining.)

She has before now successfully made head alone and unaided against the most formidable combinations, and she

has not lost her capacity by a wise policy and strenuous exertions to watch over and preserve the vital interests of the Empire. (Applause.)

The Admiralty are assured that His Majesty's Government will not hesitate to ask the House of Commons for whatever provision the circumstances of each year may require. But the aid which Canada could give at the present time is not to be measured only in ships or money. (Loud cheers.) Any action on the part of Canada to increase the power and mobility of the Imperial Navy and thus widen the margin of our common safety, would be recognized everywhere as a most significant witness to the united strength of the Empire, and to the renewed resolve of the Overseas Dominions to take their part in maintaining its integrity. (Loud applause.)

10. The Prime Minister of the Dominion having inquired in what form any immediate aid that Canada might give would be most effective, we have no hesitation in answering after a prolonged consideration of all the circumstances that it is desirable that such aid should include the provision of a certain number of the largest and strongest ships of war which science can build or money supply." (Loud cheers and prolonged applause.)

In this twentieth century of Christianity, in this age which boasts of its civilization, the increasing tendency of the nations to arm themselves against each other is not only regrettable, but depressing and alarming. May the day soon approach when international differences will be settled by appeal to a tribunal established by international authority, and so constituted that its decrees will unfailingly command respect and obedience. (Applause, some Liberals joining.) But while war is still the supreme arbiter between the nations, we to whose care this vast heritage has been committed must never forget that we are the trustees of its security. (Loud cheers.)

Do Canadians sufficiently realize the disparity between the naval risks of our Empire and those of any other nation? The armies of continental Europe number their men by the million, not by the thousand. They are highly equipped and organized; the whole population have undergone military training, and any one of these countries is absolutely secure against invasion from Great Britain, which could not send an expeditionary force of more than one hundred and fifty thousand men, at the highest estimate. Such a force would be outnumbered twenty to one by any of the great European powers. This Empire is not a great military power, and it has based its security in the past as in the present almost entirely on the strength of the navy. A crushing defeat upon the high seas would render the British Islands or any of the Dominions subject to invasion by any great military power. The loss of such a decisive battle by Great Britain would practically destroy the United Kingdom, shatter the British Empire to its foundation, and change profoundly the destiny of its component parts. The advantages which Great Britain could gain from defeating the naval forces of any other power would be non-existent except in so far as the result would insure the safety of the Empire. On the other hand, there are practically no limits to the ambitions which might be indulged in by other powers if the British navy were once destroyed or disabled. There is, therefore, grave cause for concern when once the naval supremacy of the Empire seems on the point of being successfully challenged. (Applause.)

The great outstanding fact which arrests our attention in considering the existing conditions of naval power is this: Twelve years ago the British navy and the British flag were predominant in every ocean of the world and along the shores of every continent. To-day they are predominant nowhere except in the North Sea. The paramount duty of ensuring safety in home waters has been fulfilled by withdrawing or reducing squadrons in every part of the world, and by concentrating nearly all the effective naval forces in close proximity to the British Islands. In 1902 there were

fifty-five British warships on the Mediterranean station; to-day there are nineteen. There were fourteen on the North America and West Indies station; to-day there are three. There were three on the southeast coast of South Africa; to-day there is one. There were sixteen on the Cape of Good Hope station; to-day there are three. There were eight on the Pacific station; to-day there are two. There were forty-two on the China station; to-day there are thirty-one. There were twelve on the Australian station; to-day there are eight. There were ten on the East Indies station; to-day there are nine. Or, to sum up, in 1902 there were one hundred and sixty ships on foreign and colonial stations against seventy-six to-day.

Do not imagine that this result has been brought about by any reduction in expenditure, for the case is precisely the reverse. Great Britain's total naval expenditure in 1902 was less than \$152,000,000. For the present fiscal year it will exceed \$220,000,000. Why, then, has the naval force of the Empire been so enormously reduced throughout the world, while at the same time the expenditure has increased by nearly fifty per cent? For the simple reason that the increasing strength of other navies, and especially of the German navy, has compelled Great Britain not only to increase her fleet, but to concentrate it in the vicinity of the British Islands; and there has been, of course, a substantial increase of strength in home waters. In short, the strain of meeting changed conditions has been so heavy and unceasing that, in spite of largely increased expenditure and every possible exertion, the Admiralty have been compelled by pressure of circumstances to withdraw or diminish forces throughout the world which in time of peril safeguarded the security and integrity of the King's dominions, and in time of peace were a living and visible symbol of the tie that unites all the subjects of the Crown. (Applause.)

It is neither necessary nor desirable in this place to debate or discuss the probability or imminence of war. The real test of our action is the existence or non-existence of

absolute security. (Loud cheers.) We cannot afford to be satisfied with anything less than that, for the risks are too great. It should never be forgotten that without war, without the firing of a shot or the striking of a blow, our naval supremacy may disappear, and with it the sole guarantee of the Empire's continued existence. (Hear, hear.) I especially desire to emphasize this consideration; for all history, and especially modern history, conveys to us many grave warnings that the issue of great events may be determined, and often is determined, not by actual war resulting in victory or defeat, but by the mere existence of unmistakable and pronounced naval or military superiority on either side. (Applause.)

The fact that trade routes, vital to the Empire's continued existence, are inadequately defended and protected, by reason of necessary concentration in home waters, is exceedingly impressive and ever startling. Even during the present year the battleships of the British Mediterranean fleet based on Malta have been withdrawn and based on Gibraltar in order that they might become more easily available if necessary for aid in home waters. The Atlantic fleet based on Gibraltar has been withdrawn to the vicinity of the British Islands for the same reason. Under such conditions the British flag is not predominant in the Mediterranean, and, with every available exertion on the part of the whole Empire, it will be impossible to regain the necessary position of strength in that great highway before 1915 or 1916. Austria-Hungary, with only one hundred and forty miles of sea coast, and with absolutely no colonial possessions, is building in the Mediterranean a formidable fleet of dreadnoughts which will attain its full strength in about three years, and which will be supported by strong battleships of the pre-dreadnought type, and by cruisers, torpedo craft, and other necessary auxiliaries. The fleet of Italy in the same theatre will be even more powerful and more formidable.

The withdrawal of the British flag and the British navy from so many parts of the world for the purpose of concen-

tration in home waters has been necessary but unfortunate. Our navy was once dominant everywhere, and the white ensign was the token of naval supremacy in all the seas. Is it not time that the former conditions should in some measure be restored? (Applause.) Upon our own coasts, both Atlantic and Pacific, powerful squadrons were maintained twelve years ago. To-day the flag is not shown on either seaboard. I am assured that the aid which we propose will enable such special arrangements to be consummated that, without courting disaster at home, an effective fleet of battleships and cruisers can be established in the Pacific, and a powerful squadron can periodically visit our Atlantic seaboard, to assert once more the naval strength of the Empire along these coasts. (Applause.) I do not forget, however, that it is the general naval supremacy of the Empire which primarily safeguards the Overseas Dominions. New Zealand's battleship is ranged in line with the other British battleships in the North Sea (Applause), because there New Zealand's interests may be best guarded by protecting the very heart of the Empire. (Loud applause.)

In presenting our proposals, it will be borne in mind that we are not undertaking or beginning a system of regular and periodical contributions. I agree with the resolution of this House in 1909, that the payment of such contributions would not be the most satisfactory solution of the question of defence. (Some Liberal applause.)

Upon the information which I have disclosed to the House, the situation is in my opinion sufficiently grave to demand immediate action. (Loud applause.) We have asked His Majesty's Government in what form temporary and immediate aid can best be given by Canada at this juncture. The answer has been unhesitating and unequivocal. Let me again quote it :

" We have no hesitation in answering after a prolonged consideration of all the circumstances that it is desirable that such aid should include the provision of a certain num-

ber of the largest and strongest ships of war which science can build or money supply." (Loud applause.)

Upon inquiry as to the cost of such a battleship, we are informed by the Admiralty that it is approximately £2,350,000 including armament and first outfit of ordnance stores and ammunition. The total cost of three such battleships, which when launched will be the most powerful in the world, would be approximately \$35,000,000, and we ask the people of Canada through their Parliament to grant that sum to His Majesty the King (Loud and repeated cheering) of Great Britain and Ireland and of the Overseas Dominions, in order to increase the effective naval forces of the Empire, to safeguard our shores and our seaborne commerce, and to make secure the common heritage of all who owe allegiance to the King. (Applause.)

These ships will be at the disposal of His Majesty the King for the common defence of the Empire. (Cheers.) They will be maintained and controlled as part of the Royal Navy (Hear, hear); and we have the assurance that if at any time in the future it should be the will of the Canadian people to establish a Canadian unit of the Royal Navy, these vessels can be recalled by the Canadian Government to form part of that unit, in which case, of course, they would be maintained by Canada and not by Great Britain. (Cheers.) In that event, there would necessarily be reasonable notice of such recall; and, indeed, Canada would not desire or suggest the sudden withdrawal of so powerful a contingent from any important theatre in which the naval forces of the Empire might be exposed to severe and sudden attack. In the meantime, I am assured that special arrangements will be made to give Canadians the opportunity of serving as officers on these ships. (Applause.)

Without intending or desiring to indulge in controversial discussion, I may be permitted to allude to British naval organization. Obviously, one could not make a very complete or thorough study of so great an organization in a few weeks.

or even a few months; but during recent years, and especially during the past summer, I have had occasion to learn something of its methods, its character, and its efficiency, and good reason to conclude that it is undoubtedly the most thorough and effective in the world. (Hear, hear.) There have been proposals, to which I shall no more than allude, that we should build up a great naval organization in Canada. In my humble opinion, nothing of an efficient character could be built up in this country within a quarter or perhaps half a century. (Hear, hear.) Even then it would be but a poor and weak substitute (Hear, hear) for that splendid organization which the Empire already possesses, and which has been evolved and built up through centuries of the most searching experience and of the highest endeavour. (Applause.) Is there really any need that we should undertake the hazardous and costly experiment of building up a naval organization especially restricted to this Dominion, when upon just and self-respecting terms we can take such part as we desire in naval defence through the existing naval organization of the Empire (Applause), and in that way fully and effectively avail ourselves of the men and the resources at the command of Canada?

Where shall these ships be built? They will be built under Admiralty supervision in the United Kingdom, for the reason that at present there are no adequate facilities for constructing them in Canada. The plant required for the construction of a dreadnought battleship is enormous, and it would be impossible at present to maintain shipbuilding in this country on such a scale. In any case, only the hull could be built in Canada; because the machinery, the armour, and the guns would necessarily be constructed or manufactured in the United Kingdom. The additional cost of construction in Canada would be about \$12,000,000 for the three ships, and it would be impossible to estimate the delay. No one is more eager than myself for the development of shipbuilding industries in Canada, but we cannot, upon any business or economic considerations, begin with the construction of dreadnoughts; and especially we could not do so when these ships are urgently required within two or three

years at the outside, for rendering aid upon which may depend the Empire's future existence. (Applause.)

According to my conception, the effective development of shipbuilding industries in Canada must commence with small beginnings and in a businesslike way. (Hear, hear.) I have discussed this subject with the Admiralty, and they thoroughly realize that it is not to the Empire's advantage that all shipbuilding facilities should be concentrated in the United Kingdom. I am assured, therefore, that the Admiralty are prepared in the early future to give orders for the construction in Canada of small cruisers, oil-tank vessels, and auxiliary craft of various kinds. (Loud applause.) The plant required is relatively small as compared with that which is necessary for a dreadnought battleship, and such an undertaking would have a much more secure and permanent basis from a business standpoint. For the purpose of stimulating so important and necessary an industry, we have expressed our willingness to bear a portion of the increased cost for a time at least. (Applause.) I see no reason why all vessels required in the future for our Government service should not be built in Canada, even at some additional cost. (Applause.) In connection with the development of shipbuilding, I should not be surprised to see the establishment of a higher class of engineering works, which would produce articles now imported and not presently manufactured in Canada. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, although the sum which we propose to devote for necessary naval aid at this critical juncture is to be expended in Great Britain, yet we believe that this step will result, under the conditions which I have described, in very marked development of more than one industry in Canada, and that, even from a purely economic and material standpoint, the step has much to commend it. (Hear, hear.)

These ships will constitute an aid brought by the Canadian people to His Majesty the King as a token of their determination to maintain the integrity of the Empire and to assist in repelling any danger which may threaten

its security. It is most appropriate that the opportunity should have come when the Crown is represented in Canada by His Royal Highness the Governor-General, who has rendered such valuable and eminent service to the State, and who takes so deep and splendid an interest in all that concerns the welfare and safety of every portion of His Majesty's Dominions. (Loud applause and cheers.) Canada is sending these ships to range themselves in the battle line of the Empire with those of the mother country, of Australia, and of New Zealand. They will be the three most powerful battleships in the world, and they will bear historic names associated with this country. (Applause.) Thus, every Canadian will realize, in seeing or reading of these ships, that they are a gift in which he has participated, and that, by their presence in the battle line of the Empire, he has freely taken a direct and distinct share in maintaining the Empire's safety.

No modern nation possessing a great sea-borne commerce can afford to neglect its interests upon the high seas. Heaven forbid that in this country we should aid or abet any warlike or aggressive tendencies. This Empire will never undertake any war of aggression, and all the influences of Canada will assuredly be arrayed against any such course; but we know that war has come many times within the past fifty years without warning, like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, and thereby the power, the influence, and the destiny of more than one nation have been profoundly affected. A naval war especially may come with startling suddenness, for these tremendous engines of war are always ready and prepared for battle. The security, indeed the very existence, of this Empire depends on sea power. When we are obliged to abdicate the seas, it may even be without war, but in the face of overwhelming force, the Empire's arteries will no longer pulsate, the blood will cease to flow in its veins and dissolution will be at hand.

But if we should neglect a duty which I conceive we owe to ourselves, and if irreparable disaster should ensue, what

would be our future destiny? Obviously, as an independent nation or as an important part of the great neighbouring republic. What, then, would be our responsibilities, and what the burden upon us for a protection on the high seas much less powerful and less effective than that which we enjoy to-day? Take the case of one nation whose territory, resources, population, and wealth may fairly be compared with those of Canada. The naval estimates of Argentina for four years, from 1909 to 1912 inclusive, amounted to \$35,000,000. In addition to this, the Parliament of Argentina voted during the same four years for special naval and military purposes more than \$40,000,000. No information is available as to the exact proportion of the last mentioned sum which was appropriated for naval purposes, but it is understood that the greater portion was for naval construction. It is safe, therefore, to estimate that during the past four years Argentina has expended for naval purposes not less than sixty-five to seventy million dollars. The federal and state expenditure of the United States comprises a total annual outlay for armament of between \$250,000,000 and \$300,000,000, or at the rate of \$2.75 per head. A similar expenditure by Canada would mean an annual outlay of some \$20,000,000 or \$25,000,000 or between eighty and one hundred million dollars during the same period.

It is apparent, therefore, that the aid which we propose to bring at this juncture is of a moderate and reasonable character. For forty-five years as a confederation we have enjoyed the protection of the British navy without the cost of a dollar (Hear, hear), and I venture to submit my firm conviction that this assistance freely tendered by the people of Canada through their Parliament is due to their own self-respect. (Loud applause.)

So far as official estimates are available, the expenditure of Great Britain in naval and military defence for the provinces which now constitute Canada, during the nineteenth century, was not less than \$400,000,000. Even since

- the inception of our confederation, and since Canada has attained the status of a great Dominion, the amount so expended by Great Britain for the naval and military defence of Canada vastly exceeds the sum which we are now asking Parliament to appropriate. From 1870 to 1890 the proportionate cost of North Atlantic squadrons which guarded our coasts was from \$125,000,000 to \$150,000,000. From 1853 to 1903 Great Britain's expenditure on military defence in
- Canada runs closely up to one hundred million dollars.

Has the protection of the flag and the prestige of the Empire meant anything for us during all that period? (Hear, hear.) Hundreds of illustrations are at hand, but let me give just two. During a period of disorder in a distant country, a Canadian citizen was unjustifiably arrested and fifty lashes were laid on his back. Appeal was made to Great Britain, and with what result? A public apology was made to him, and fifty pounds were paid for every lash. (Applause.) In time of dangerous riot and wild terror in a foreign city a Canadian religious community remained unafraid. 'Why did you not fear?' they were asked, and unhesitatingly came the answer, 'The Union Jack floated above us.' (Applause.)

I have alluded to the difficulty of finding an acceptable basis upon which the great dominions, co-operating with the mother country in defence, can receive and assert an adequate voice in the control and moulding of foreign policy. We were brought closely in touch with both subjects when we met the British ministers in the Committee of Imperial Defence. That committee is peculiarly constituted, but in my judgment is very effective. It consists of the Prime Minister of Great Britain and of such persons as he may summon to attend it. Practically all the members of the Cabinet from time to time attend its deliberations, and usually the more important members of the Cabinet are present. In addition, the naval and military experts and technical officers of the various departments concerned are in attendance. A very large portion of the committee's work is carried on by sub-committees, which are often composed

in part of persons who are not members of the general committee itself, and who are selected for their special knowledge of the subjects to be considered and reported upon. The amount of work which has thus been performed, during the past five or six years in particular, is astonishing, and I have no doubt that it has contributed largely to the future safety of the whole Empire in time of peril. The committee is not technically or constitutionally responsible to the House of Commons, and thus it is not supposed to concern itself with policy. As so many important members of the Cabinet are summoned to attend the committee, its conclusions are usually accepted by the Cabinet, and thus command the support of a majority of the House of Commons. While the committee does not control policy in any way, and could not undertake to do so, as it is not responsible to Parliament, it is necessarily obliged constantly to consider foreign policy and foreign relations, for the obvious reason that defence, and especially naval defence, is inseparably connected with such consideration.

I am assured by His Majesty's Government that, pending a final solution of the question of voice and influence, they would welcome the presence in London of a Canadian minister during the whole or a portion of each year. Such minister would be regularly summoned to all meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and would be regarded as one of its permanent members. (Applause.) No important step in foreign policy would be undertaken without consultation with such a representative of Canada. (Applause.) This seems a very marked advance, both from our standpoint and from that of the United Kingdom. It would give to us an opportunity of consultation, and therefore an influence which hitherto we have not possessed. The conclusions and declarations of Great Britain in respect to foreign relations could not fail to be strengthened by the knowledge that such consultation and co-operation with the Overseas Dominions had become an accomplished fact. (Hear, hear.)

No thoughtful man can fail to realize that very complex and difficult questions confront those who believe that we must find a basis of permanent co-operation in naval defence, and that any such basis must afford to the Overseas Dominions an adequate voice in the moulding and control of foreign policy. (Hear, hear.) It would have been idle to expect, and indeed we did not expect, to reach in the few weeks at our disposal during the past summer a final solution of that problem, which is not less interesting than difficult, which touches most closely the future destiny of the Empire, and which is fraught with even graver significance for the British Islands than for Canada. But I conceive that its solution is not impossible; and, however difficult the task may be, it is not the part of wisdom or of statesmanship to evade it. And so we invite the statesmen of Great Britain to study with us this, the real problem of Imperial existence. (Applause.)

The next ten or twenty years will be pregnant with great results for this Empire, and it is of infinite importance that questions of purely domestic concern, however urgent, shall not prevent any of us from rising "to the height of this great argument." But to-day, while the clouds are heavy and we hear the booming of the distant thunder, and see the lightning flashes above the horizon, we cannot and we will not wait and deliberate until any impending storm shall have burst upon us in fury and with disaster. Almost unaided, the mother land, not for herself alone, but for us as well, is sustaining the burden of a vital Imperial duty, and confronting an overmastering necessity of national existence. Bringing the best assistance that we may in the urgency of the moment, we come thus to her aid, in token of our determination to protect and ensure the safety and integrity of this Empire, and of our resolve to defend on sea, as well as on land, our flag, our honour, and our heritage. (Great cheering.)

THE NAVAL AID ACT.

An Act to authorize measures for increasing the effective naval forces of the Empire.

His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows :

1. This Act may be cited as *The Naval Aid Act*.
2. From and out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Canada there may be paid and applied a sum not exceeding thirty-five million dollars for the purpose of immediately increasing the effective naval forces of the Empire.
3. The said sum shall be used and applied under the direction of the Governor in Council in the construction and equipment of battleships or armoured cruisers of the most modern and powerful type.
4. The said ships, when constructed and equipped, shall be placed by the Governor in Council at the disposal of His Majesty for the common defence of the Empire.
5. The said sum shall be paid, used [and applied, and the said ships shall be constructed and placed at the disposal of His Majesty subject to such terms, conditions and arrangements, as may be agreed upon between the Governor in Council and His Majesty's Government.